



The Chico AAUW Grapvine

American Association of University Women - Chico Branch - Vol. 37 No. 9 Apr 2025

NEXT BRANCH MEETING...

WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARDS

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 3-5 PM

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH HALL

2341 FLORAL AVENUE, CHICO

AAUW advances gender equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

By joining AAUW, we belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women and girls have a fair chance.

AAUW membership is open to all graduates holding a recognized associate (or equivalent), baccalaureate or higher degree from a qualified education institution.

In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks diverse membership; there shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or class.



Chico (CA) branch

We received a number of nominations for our *Women of Distinction* awards. Having so many capable women from which to choose made it especially difficult to make the final selections but the committee appreciated all the people who took the time to provide their suggestions. We are honoring four women who have provided leadership in their workplace and our community. They are dedicated to public service and work within the North State to find solutions to area concerns. All are outstanding role models for young women and the greater community through their leadership and scholarship. Each award recipient has agreed to attend our award ceremony and will give a short talk.

This event is an important way for our AAUW branch to recognize and celebrate women. It also highlights how we all benefit by having women in leadership positions; one of AAUW's core missions. We encourage you to attend, invite a spouse or friend, and give our 2025 women of distinction a rousing show of support. You can also help by bringing some finger food to add to the reception. More information about that will be coming in an email next week. The following nominees will receive our 2025 *Women of Distinction* award.

Alexa Benson-Valavanis. She has served as the president and CEO of the North Valley Community Foundation (NVCF) since 2005. Hired to rebuild the foundation, Benson-Valavanis mobilized entrepreneurs and philanthropists locally and around the globe to provide funding and help. Under her leadership, the foundation has grown from serving a handful of clients to more than 500 while engaging thousands of donors and generating revenue of more than \$180 million for causes in Northern California and worldwide. During the Camp Fire she transformed the NVCF into the lead philanthropic organization for the relief and recovery efforts. She also developed another response team to COVID-19 to help provide relief to at-risk populations. She also serves on numerous advisory committees and boards.

Dolores Mitchell. She is well known in our community for her dedication to bringing the world of art to Chico. First, as a professor at California State University, Chico for 30 years, as a founder of the local Avenue 9 Gallery, and last, by her many community-wide presentations and exhibits. Through her teaching of art history, she helped her students gain cultural awareness, develop critical thinking and analytical skills, and

Women of Distinction Awards - cont'd

learn how to suss out the story behind the art piece. Mitchell was a firm believer in the idea that art shows us what was important and valuable to different cultures over time. To promote her art and that of other local artists, Mitchell publishes her monthly newsletter, *Art Talk*. The newsletter often includes a theme that helps explain the artistic process. In service to the arts, she has left a legacy of sharing and promoting art and is still going strong well into her 90s.

Anastacia Snyder-Lando. As executive director of Catalyst Domestic and Sexual Violence Services in Butte and Glenn counties, Anastacia Snyder-Lando is responsible for the overall management of the agency's operations. Catalyst is dedicated to providing victims with vital safe housing and other services, including a 24/7 hotline, free short-term therapy, legal and law enforcement advocacy, and other essential services for adults and their children. In addition to Catalyst, Snyder-Lando holds many state and local leadership positions, including the governor's appointment to the California Office of Emergency Services, the FEMA Board, and is an elected member of the Butte County Continuum of Care Council.

Linda Watkins-Bennett. Linda Watkins-Bennett is a long-time veteran of local journalism, and recently spoke at AAUW's Women in the Media event. Born and raised in Chico, Watkins-Bennett has years of experience at KHSL TV since graduating from California State University, Chico. A journalist for over 30 years, she brings into focus an in-depth understanding of changes and concerns in Chico and the entire North State. She is currently anchor of *Action News Now* at noon and the 4 pm time slot. She believes it is important to remain fair, balanced, and impartial in presenting the news to North State residents.

Message from the Co-presidents

2024-2025 Branch Leaders

Presidents –

Jana Lawton

Michelle Rasmussen

Membership –

Mary Huntsinger

Anne Russell

Finance –

Lyn Smith

Secretary –

Severance Dolan

Program –

Dori Moura

Jan Britton

Newsletter Editor –

Anne Russell

Public Policy –

Carol Holzgrafe

Tech Trek Team –

Katy Azevedo

Pam Bodnar

Debbie Rosenow

Carol Holzgrafe

Diversity Team –

Margaret Swick

Jan Britton

High School Scholarships –

Marilyn Myrick

College Scholarships –

Jan Britton

Website –

Helen Gesick

Toni Reid

Historian –

Michelle Rasmussen

Greetings friends,

Our AAUW year is winding down but we are not slowing down. We have two excellent programs in store in April and May that we know will sharpen your pride in women and what they can accomplish. Thank you to Jan Britton and Dori Moura for taking the lead in coordinating our *Women of Distinction* event. We will learn a lot more about four women whose life work has helped shape our community for the better. Acknowledging women, in public, is important. Please plan to attend and be part of this celebration.

Women have to champion women and promote themselves. *Women's History Month* was envisioned as a way to bring to light many women of note who were largely written out of history. It is incumbent upon us to rediscover and honor the achievements of women! While we're at it, let's not forget to celebrate all the amazing women in our own lives. Our mothers, aunts, daughters, sisters, and friends who support us, teach us, revel in our successes, and spend the time with us that enriches our lives.

So many conversations lately find their way to negative news and attacks on AAUW's core values and goals. It can be disheartening when so much is happening at a rapid-fire pace so it's important that we also concentrate on ways to stay positive. Being involved with the people and the activities of the branch is one way to counter the negativity. We can still work together for positive change and advancement of our core mission—education and equity for all women and girls.

If you wonder what that work might look like, we share an article from the Pacifica AAUW newsletter. It was written by **Cherie Sorokin** (below), Chair of the AAUW Board of Directors. She gives us ways to be political, but not partisan, laying out clear options to direct our focus and efforts. Try doing one thing on that list and see how it changes your state of mind.

Let's raise our voices for women!

Michelle Rasmussen and Jana Lawton

Chico AAUW Co-presidents



[Cherie Sorokin is a member of a California AAUW branch and the chair of the AAUW Board of Directors. This is a slightly abridged version of her ideas on how to be positive in these uncertain times.]

While it's always great to take time in March to honor the past achievements of women, in 2025, the present and the future of women are surely on every AAUW member's mind! We have always championed the rights of women, but it's pretty clear we need to up the ante more than ever or risk the undoing of so much we have fought for since 1881.

Get Political—But, Not Partisan. Take a stand and make your voice heard. It's the political process and give and take that determines our public policy. Use AAUW's Public Policy

President's Message - cont'd

AAUW Social Media

If you are on social media, be sure to like and share our posts on

Facebook – [AAUW Chico](#)

Instagram – [@aauw_chico](#)

Our email
aauwchico@gmail.com

Our website –
chico-ca.aauw.net

Or
Scan this code with your
phone for more information



The more you interact with our content, the more likely potential new members will see it on their feeds.

Mary Huntsinger, Membership

Priorities as a guide for your efforts but also educate yourself about what other groups are doing. It's important to collaborate and share ideas! PS—If you want to go beyond political to partisan, just remember not to do so in the name of AAUW.

As AAUW members, focus on these important issues. Both are at the heart of AAUW's mission.

1. The value of our higher education system which is foundational to women achieving greater economic security and assuming high-level leadership roles.

2. The need to continue to reduce and eliminate barriers that hold women back.

Here are some simple steps to get started on these issues.

At the National Level

Sign up to be an [AAUW Two-Minute Activist](#) and get your friends to sign up too. You don't have to be an AAUW member to use our Two-Minute Activist program. Actually respond when the call comes to send a note via our Two-Minute Activist program and personalize your introduction.

Write to Doug LaMalfa, our Congressional Representative, and Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff, our Senators, asking them for their support of higher education, diversity, and women's rights.

Support AAUW's *Greatest Needs Fund* to help us increase our public policy and advocacy work.

At the State level

Email, write, or call Assemblymember James Gallagher and State Senator Megan Dahle. Tell them we are counting on them to build and maintain safeguards into California law in support of women's rights.

Call your college or university alumni association or the president's office to find out how that institution is responding to executive orders and what you can do to support your alma mater in these difficult times. Emphasize the importance of graduate-level programs and fellowships for women.

Locally

Tell everyone you know how important it is to keep Title IX protections for women on campus, and to continue diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Intentionally include folks whose perspective you may not agree with in your conversations. AAUW has webinars you can watch on their website on how to manage difficult conversations with those who might not agree with us.

Write an op ed or letter to the editor in the ER about our values and how they are being denigrated.

Support local nonprofits, including Chico AAUW, with your talent and time, to help keep them working in this chaotic environment.

Let's raise our collective voices!

Membership News

ANTIQUE APPRAISAL FAIRE A SUCCESS!

AAUW Chico holds one fundraiser each year to send local 8th grade girls to AAUW's Tech Trek STEM Camp for Girls at U.C. Davis. This year's Faire, held March 23 at the Chico Women's Club, fulfilled its mission of earning funds, letting Chico know about us, and entertaining all-comers with an intriguing variety of antiques.



The actual proceeds from the affair won't be available until all the bills are paid but, if one depends on the steady stream of box and picture-laden Chicoans coming in the door, it should be satisfying.

After leading the Faire for the past many years, Sue Blizman announced that this will be her last event and is hoping to turn the organizing over to another leader. She says the job really isn't difficult or too time-consuming (see the actual job description elsewhere in this newsletter under "Help Wanted!").

Sue, of course, does not do this alone—she has a committee—all of whom will return, bringing their experience for next year's event (see also "Help Wanted!"). We thank them all.

But, the overwhelming star of the show is local glass expert Sam Kissée. Sam is the appraisal wrangler,



Former and future Tech Trekkers

gathering, year-after-year, at least six area experts in their field, from antique postcards, to dolls, quilts, jewelry, china, furniture, glass, art work, and local memorabilia. Outstanding this year was a large folding screen (see photo above), made in Japan but collected in Hawaii.



Crazy quilt

The names of our Appraiser Hall of Fame include, beside Sam, Kathy Squyres, Beth Dooley, Barb Gore, Lee Laney, and Randy Taylor. John Watson

staffed the door, telling guests which appraiser they should see (and, yes, he is used to Sherlock Holmes jokes). We thank them all.



But the pinnacle of delight for this particular Faire was the participation of, not only three former Tech Trekkers, but five newly selected girls who will go to camp this July. If these young women are the future, we'll be okay.

Membership News - cont'd

One more thing: **Build-A-Girl** made her annual appearance, managing to earn almost two full camperships. It's not too late to contribute to complete her. To "buy" a leg, arm, torso, or another part of her, send your donation (between \$10 and \$125) to branch treasurer Lyn Smith. Be sure to mark that the donation is for Build-A-Girl, and is tax deductible.

Now, on to planning for next year's Faire—March 22, 2026.

MEMBER UPDATES

Two of our AAUW Chico members have had some health issues lately and deserve some attention.

- Diane Flaherty had a stroke a few weeks ago.
- Dianne Lorenz had serious cardiac surgery recently and a small stroke at Enloe.

Both, long-time AAUW members, would enjoy hearing from any of us, whether card, calls, emails, or a visit. Diane F is home again and has recovered and is going to the gym again. Dianne L is still at Enloe, but plans to leave there for rehabilitation in a few days. Check before trying to visit. Their contact information is in the Directory.

If you know of a branch member who could use some TLC from us, please let me know.

Carol Holzgrafe

Membership News - cont'd

ANNUAL MEETING

Prior to COVID, AAUW CA had in-person annual meetings. It was a time for a banquet, amazing speakers, learning how to develop branch programs, projects, and member recruitment strategies, networking, taking care of elections and business matters, and just a lot of fun. The downside was that it was not inexpensive and not as many members were able to participate due to the meeting location.

Now, all members can attend the *Annual Meeting* because it is on Zoom. No banquet, no networking, no dressing up, but still a lot of fun. The AAUW California Annual Event is Saturday April 26th, 10-2 pm. The theme is **Pivoting 4 Our Future**. Watch for registration information coming via email.

AAUW also has national and state elections coming up during which we select our leaders for the coming year. This will also be done by email. It is important for members to vote. Even though there is not a meeting to attend, we still have to have a quorum in order for the vote to be valid so member participation is critical. Look for your ballots in late April.



Membership News - cont'd

HELP WANTED!

As the new AAUW year approaches, while most of our board is staying on, a few positions are open. Here's your chance to discover more about AAUW Chico and serve your community . . . and make more new friends!

Membership

One person or two friends would work well. We recommend forming a committee this year because different people enjoy doing different things. The job entails

- *Computer work*: you just need to be comfortable using computers; the instructions are clear; workload mostly light
- *Actively seeking out people* who may be interested or working with prospective members others have recruited
- *Following up* to get them registered
- *Ambassadors* to help new members integrate with branch activities.
- *Contacting members* who have forgotten to renew their membership in a timely manner

Antique Appraisal Faire leader

Sue Blizman, having led this event for many years, is stepping down, making room for a new leader and new ideas. According to Sue, her role involves

- *Being a leader*. The Faire is our fund-raiser to send local 8th grade girls to the Tech Trek STEM Camp for Girls at UC Davis. "It has been fun to work with incredible AAUW members, meet interesting appraisers, see fascinating antiques, and best of all, meet former [and current] Tech Trekkers who are the inspiration for our project."
- You would have *a committee*, already in place, to do almost every part of the event organizing; mostly the leader keeps track and holds monthly meetings from about November through March.
- *Ensuring that everything goes smoothly on Faire Day*. And, usually, it does.
- *A second-in-command* for the Faire food. (Kit Oldham has offered to organize this again next year but needs some help, possibly someone who could take the afternoon shift, help clean up, etc.

Interest Group Wrangler

This is an easy one: contacting each interest group leader before an upcoming newsletter and collect data about the date, location, and other details about the group. Having someone take care of this eases the job for our newsletter editor Anne Russell.

If you might be interested in any of these positions, please let us know.

Jana and Michelle, Co-presidents

Membership News - cont'd

NEW MEMBER KRISTIN SCHROTH

Kristin Schroth has lived in Chico since 1999 and, newly retired, is ready to meet our wonderful members and make some new friends. She loves math, science, logic, and order.

Kristin was born in Morenci, Arizona, and is a graduate of New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Socorro, New Mexico, with a B.S. in 1983 in metallurgical engineering. After graduating, a recession made it difficult to find work. She moved to Washington, D.C., where her parents were at the time and landed a job at the Naval Research Laboratory doing friction and wear testing of ion-implanted metals. Wanting to make more money, she landed a computer job with Electronic Data Systems (Ross Perot's company) which has just been bought by General Motors. She worked for this company for 27 years, most spent in the Detroit area supporting automotive design software and a stint in Seattle for a year. She was able to transfer to Phoenix for a few years supporting banking software which afforded her time with her immediate family. The stars were aligned, Kristin met her husband who had attended Chico State and always wanted to return to the area.

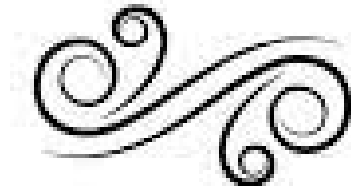
In 1999, Kristin transferred from Phoenix with her husband and found work in Chico supporting healthcare software for California Medicare claims while her husband found work as a civil engineer. Their daughter Erika was born one year later. From 2012-2023, she was worked at a local healthcare software company called Landacorp as a project manager until she was laid off. Looking back, she sees it as a blessing as she was able to spend more time with her mother who died last year at age 96. Interestingly, Kristin's mother was also active in the local AAUW where she had been living.

Daughter Erika attended Tech Trek locally as an 8th grader and then was a junior counselor in the summer of 2016. Kristin has always supported AAUW and finally has the time to be active as a member.

Kristin's volunteer activities include the Butte Humane Society, driving for the bi-monthly Chico Food Project (Blue Bag), and a patient escort at the Planned Parenthood facility. Most of her hobbies involve being outside, from walking, hiking, camping, to snowshoeing. She likes games like Michigan Rummy, Qwirkle, and 5 Crowns. Since she and her husband are both retired now, they plan to travel as much as possible. Favorite bucket-list trips were to Iceland and Greece. This summer, they're taking a New Mexico Tech alumni rafting trip on

Membership News - cont'd

the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. Spending 40 years working full-time didn't leave a lot of room for making friends. Kristin is looking forward to meeting other women and participating in activities.



THE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL PRESENTATION

On Sunday, April 27, 2 pm, at Bidwell Presbyterian Church in Chico, the North Valley Chamber Choral presents *Ride On King Jesus: The American Spiritual*. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$5 for students and children. Tickets are available at the church, the Chico Theater Company, and chicotix.com (tickets will be available soon).

The North Valley Chamber Choral was formed in 2010 to provide audiences with high-quality choral music performances. They have presented numerous choral works, including those by Benjamin Britten, Johann Sebastian Bach, folksongs of Ralph Von Williams, and Renaissance choral pieces.

Tech Trek

The Tech Trek team has completed our interviews and selected six incredible 7th graders from local Chico schools to attend camp: two students from Chico Jr High, one from Chico Country Day School, two from Bidwell Jr High and one from Marsh Jr High. They are excited to represent AAUW Chico at the UC Davis summer STEM camp in July. The remaining students we interviewed are listed as alternates in the event that space opens at the camps or a selected student cannot attend.

Five of our newly selected Trekkers and three of our former campers volunteered at the recent Antique Appraisal Faire fundraiser event at the Women's Center in Chico on Sunday April 23rd. They warmly greeted guests as they entered the venue and enthusiastically shared stories of their previous or upcoming camp experiences. One former Trekker will again serve as a camp counselor at the UC Santa Cruz STEM camp.

We wish to again thank our generous AAUW members and community donors for their support of the Tech Trek program!

Carol, Marilyn, Debbie, Katie, and Pam —Your Tech Trek Team

Interest Groups for Fun ... and Learning

NOTE: Use the AAUW directory for contact information or email aauwchico@gmail.com



LES FLANEURS

Carol Holzgrafe (email/call for schedule and more information). A walking/talking tour of Chico and Paradise. Usually meets Tues, Thur, and/or Sat @ 8:30 or 9:30 am, depending on the season.

WINE AND WHINE

Carol Holzgrafe (text/email for more information). Meets 3rd Wed, Apr 16, @ 5:30 pm at Wine Time, 26 Lost Dutchman Dr, Chico. Good conversation, the best wine list in town (along with non-alcoholic drinks of course). Fascinating food menu to share. Please RSVP, bring friends, visiting relatives, new prospective members...

OUT TO LUNCH

Mary Huntsinger (call/text for location and to make a reservation). Meets 2nd Thur, Apr 10, 11:30 am, at Sofi's Kitchen and Bar, 134 Broadway, Chico. **Paradise and Chico branch members welcome!**

WOMEN'S MICROFINANCE

Jana Lawton (call if interested in joining). Semi-annual meetings.

WORDSMITHS

Jana Lawton (call for more information). Meets 2nd Sun, Apr 13, @ 2 pm, hosted by Jana Lawton. **All writers welcome!**

FOREIGN POLICY DISCUSSION

Jeannie Trizzino (text for more information). Meets 4th Mon, Apr 28 @ 6:30 pm. Will discuss *AI and American National Security*, presented by Jeannie Trizzino and hosted by Lyn Smith. **New members welcome!**

EVENING BOOK DISCUSSION

Elaine Schlinger (text for more information). Meets 2nd Tues, Apr 8, @ 7 pm in a member's home. Will discuss *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride.

ETHNIC WRITERS BOOK DISCUSSION

Severance Dolan (call for more information). Meets 4th Wed, Apr 23, @ 10 am in Mary Huntsinger's home. Will discuss *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh, led by Carol. **New members welcome!**

FRIDAY BOOK DISCUSSION

Severance Dolan (email for more information). Meets 4th Fri, Apr 25, @ 10 am in Woodoak condominium clubhouse. Will discuss *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell, led by Marcia Bryant. **New members welcome!**

NONFICTION BOOK DISCUSSION

Carol Krok (email for more information). Meets 1st Fri, Apr 4, @ 9:30 am in a member's home for socializing; discussion starts promptly @ 10. **Currently at capacity.**

MYSTERY BOOK DISCUSSION

Lyn Smith (call for more information). Meets 3rd Wed, Apr 16, @ 3 pm at Satsie Veith's home. Will discuss *Malice* by Heigo Higashino, led by Mary Huntsinger. **New members welcome!**

BRIDGE

Sylvia Hedlind (text/call if interested in joining). Meets 2nd Mon, Apr 14 @ 1 pm. Group plays for fun with the goal of improving members' games. **Substitutes always needed!**

IPHONE/IPAD

Helen Gesick (text for more information). Meets 3rd Tues, Apr 15, @ 2 pm. Bring your questions.

